



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

Pat Quinn, Governor
Marc Miller, Director

December 11, 2014

Ms. Kristine Donarski, Zoning Officer
Bureau County
700 South Main St.
Princeton, IL 61356

RE: **Walnut Ridge Wind LLC, Walnut, Bureau County**
Endangered Species Consultation Program
EcoCAT Database Review #1411577

Dear Ms. Donarski:

This letter provides additional consultation with Bureau County on the proposed action, pursuant to the requirements of the *Illinois Endangered Species Protection Act* [520 ILCS 10/11], the *Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act* [525 ILCS 30/17], and Title 17 *Illinois Administrative Code* Part 1075.

The Department has received additional information from Walnut Ridge LLC regarding the results of biological and acoustic surveys for bats in the project area.

Mist-netting, which entails the actual capture of bats for purposes of identification, was conducted in late July 2014 at four locations representative of habitat within the project area. Three of these locations produced captures of the **Northern Long-Eared Bat**, *Myotis septentrionalis*, including a post-lactating female and a juvenile female. Radio-telemetry tracking of two bats identified several roost trees and a roost containing more than forty individuals in an old barn. These results infer the presence of one or more maternity colonies of this species in the vicinity.

Due to the wide spacing between mist-netting locations and the narrow or small wooded areas in which these bats were captured, the Department concludes this species is widely distributed in this portion of Bureau County, so that virtually any grouping of trees and any structures within the project area should be regarded as likely to provide habitat for this species, despite the largely agricultural character of the landscape.

Although mist-netting did not produce any **Indiana Bats**, *Myotis sodalis*, acoustic monitoring in both 2013 and 2014 registered a large number of calls identified through the use of two different computer algorithms and qualitatively verified by a human expert as belonging to the Indiana Bat. As the Department predicted, most were recorded at stations in the watershed of West Bureau Creek, although some were also recorded west of Walnut. The vast majority was recorded in the month of August along

tributaries of West Bureau Creek, but smaller numbers were recorded in the spring and summer, including west of Walnut. These results infer the presence of small maternity or bachelor colonies of the Indiana Bat in the vicinity during the spring and summer, but also suggest the numbers of this species swell significantly during the fall migration.

As with the Northern Long-Eared Bat, most acoustic recording stations were located in what would typically be regarded as poor habitat for the Indiana Bat, which renders the results all the more surprising.

Worthy of note, 48% of the 136 bats captured during mist-netting were identified as the **Little Brown Bat**, *Myotis lucifugus*, a species being evaluated for listing by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The mist-netting and acoustic results affirm the presence of a listed bat species, a bat species proposed for listing, and a bat species being evaluated for listing as endangered or threatened. These species are present in numbers which support the Department's expressed opinion the proposed wind energy facility is likely to result in taking individuals of these species during power generation operations.

Consequently, the Department affirms its Recommendations #1-#4 provided in its letter of November 3, 2014. *However, any federal and state permits required to be sought pursuant to Recommendation #1 should now include the Indiana Bat.*

The Department wishes to clarify that Recommendation #4, pertaining to operational curtailment to avoid or minimize bat mortality, is necessary only at night, but may be applied to the period from one-half before sunset to one-half hour after sunrise. *In order to establish a baseline of mortality against which to measure the effectiveness of avoidance and minimization measures, the Department believes it is appropriate and necessary to operate some or all of the proposed wind turbines normally for at least one year. The Department recommends any conditions imposed by the County should provide for this flexibility.*

The Department is continuing to coordinate with Walnut Ridge LLC as new information becomes available. The Department will not hesitate to inform the County if such new information affects the Department's recommendations in any material way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith M. Shank". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Keith" and last name "Shank" being clearly legible, and "M." as a middle initial.

Keith M. Shank
Impact Assessment Section
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cc: Ingrid Schwingler, Walnut Ridge LLC